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SOCIAL SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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Certain questions raised by Professor Ellwood's recent book, *The Reconstruction of Religion*, are discussed in this article.

Is social science at present prepared to furnish the technique for religious activity, which Professor Ellwood emphasizes? The prevailingly descriptive character of social study does not encourage confident judgments of value. Moreover, social laws are as yet too imperfectly known to supply authoritative guidance.

The religious interpretation of social acts is a challenging problem. Is this problem solved by a social reinterpretation of the traditional theological concepts?

If the religion of Jesus is to be the triumphant social religion of the future we need a much more thoroughgoing social study of the teachings of Jesus than has yet been furnished.

The problem of the motivation of religion is a difficult one. The vigor of motives demands a creative consciousness which will convincingly pass judgment on the sins of the present social order.

What is to be the relationship between social science and religion? They are both seeking the best possible human world. Shall they then live and work together? In how close a union and on what terms? This question, long pending, has now been definitely formulated and flung into the arena of religious discussion by Professor Ellwood in his recent book, *The Reconstruction of Religion*.¹

The question is thrown out against the background that now oppresses every lover of mankind and every seeker after truth. A world torn asunder by conflicting ideals of life. A civilization semipagan, poised on the brink of destruction. Religion, like all other human institutions, weakened by the revolutionary pressure of democracy and science. Yet, in the possibility of its renaissance, lies the only hope for mankind. The picture is alas too familiar and the inference almost a commonplace. But here Professor Ellwood begins. The revitalizing of religion and the consequent saving of the world

¹ *The Reconstruction of Religion*. By Charles A. Ellwood. New York: Macmillan, 1922. xv+323 pages. \$2.25.

is to be accomplished by bringing religion into harmony with science and particularly with social science. Religion desires to release humanity from its ills and social science is continually discovering the means to this end. Religion seeks the solidarity of mankind and science is continually achieving like-mindedness among men concerning the manner of living. But social science lacks adequate motivation for its growing program. This religion alone can furnish as it intensifies and universalizes social values, doing for the feelings what science does for the reason. Likewise religion is ineffective to make good will universal for lack of the guidance of social knowledge and of certainty as to genuine social values. Each then is impotent to change mankind without the other; one for lack of technique and one for want of power. These two therefore come now to be joined.

If this union can be consummated, the long warfare between science and religion will indeed be accomplished. Such a result is but the natural culmination of continued contacts, with consequent modification of attitudes. Having purged our theology of its crudities concerning the physical universe by its revelation of nature, having revitalized our historical sources by the impact of its method, having shown us through psychology what is the nature of conversion and of sound religious instruction, science comes now to have her perfect work in religion by guiding us to the solution of the problem of the practical values of human living, which, according to Professor Ellwood, is the religious problem of our day.

His central argument has for its premise the social nature and significance of religion in general and of Christianity in particular. From this it is concluded that a positive Christianity can become the religion of humanity, capable of guaranteeing peace and good will and preventing the collapse of civilization. By positive Christianity is meant a Christianity based upon objective realities, upon all the facts of the total life of mankind, and therefore in harmony with the spirit

of pure science. Such a Christianity will require a church which recognizes that its supreme duty and opportunity is the creation of a Christian world and that this is to be accomplished by the formation and guidance of an effective public opinion. Thus, while the argument is for certain changes in the attitudes and structure, the content and emphasis of religion, it is obvious that it turns upon the capacity and effectiveness of science, depends upon the correctness of its diagnosis of the social function of religion and the social characteristics of Christianity, upon the ability of social science to bring to religion the authority and power which are now obviously lacking and which the situation certainly demands.

Is science in general and social science in particular prepared to meet the demands involved in this proposed union with religion? To begin with, if only a religion based upon all the facts of the total life of mankind can save the world, is science at present on the way to getting those facts, or to co-ordinating them when gathered, so that their total meaning can be available for religion? In other words, in so far as the descriptive function of science is concerned, have we yet any such thing as social science? Professor Ellwood, being a sociologist, explains that his use of the term social science "refers not only to sociology but to all the social sciences taken collectively, including anthropology, social psychology, social ethics and social philosophy, so far as these latter are based upon science." Politics and economics are not specifically mentioned, though these, with sociology and anthropology, are the obviously social sciences when the term is used to contrast the sciences that deal with human relationships with the natural sciences that deal with the physical universe. Is sociology then equipped and authorized to speak for those other sciences taken collectively?

In his recent book, *The Economic Basis of Politics*, Professor Beard points out what has happened in one field because "the living organism of human society as a subject of inquiry

has been torn apart and parcelled among specialists," who have forgotten "the profound truth enunciated by Buckle that the science of any subject is not at its center but at its periphery where it impinges upon all other sciences." So political economy has become economics, and men have absurdly tried to "write of the production, and distribution of wealth apart from the state which defines, upholds, taxes, and regulates property, the very basis of economic operations." We have then separate social sciences furnishing religion with facts in particular fields; we lack co-ordination and synthesis.

The need is still greater when it comes to value judgments. Professor Ellwood affirms it to be the duty of science to evaluate as well as describe and the special duty of the social sciences to guide ethical and religious evaluations. Yet is not sociology as now taught mostly descriptive? What proportion of college students who have taken courses in political or economic science have acquired any standards of social value or indeed any sense of the relation of politics and economics to social values? It is notorious that the value judgments of a goodly portion of current political and economic theory are in favor of the doctrines of self-interest and the competitive struggle which are generally declared by sociology to be unsocial. There is then a warfare in the house of science as in the house of religion.

The situation requires either that sociology be prepared and permitted to co-ordinate the facts and valuations of all other sciences into judgments concerning the total life of mankind, or else that the various sciences create a general staff for this purpose. In either case there would then come into being a real social science. Until this happens religion must needs attempt as best it can to relate to the whole strategy of life such separate groups of facts and such partial judgments as the various social sciences contribute. If both science and religion set their hands jointly to this task, then as Professor Ellwood foresees, the two will become but different aspects of

one fundamental attitude. This outcome, however, depends just as much upon the eagerness of scientists to develop a science of humanity as upon the desire of churchmen to develop a religion of humanity and involves the same necessity of service and even sacrifice. If the future of mankind depends upon religion becoming scientific and therefore social, it equally depends upon science becoming social and therefore religious.

A kindred question raised by the proposed union between science and religion is whether social science is yet able to formulate laws for human relationships and conduct which it can assert to be the essentials of a continuing social order. Here is where science is called upon to provide an ethical religion with authority adequate for a scientific age because derived from the validity of the social values which it seeks to perpetuate and universalize. These values religion has heretofore seized upon by instinct and feeling, or by the pressure of habit. Its certainty is in the intensity of its feeling, or the apparent invincibility of its logic. In the physical universe natural science corrects or reinforces feeling and reason with the certainty derived from objective tests, from the records of verified observations. Can such objective tests be made in the realm of social relations and values and with any comparable result of certainty?

The objective realities here are, of course, the facts and experiences of human living and out of them social science has already drawn more certainty concerning the way of life for mankind than religion has yet used. The nature, causes, and consequences of poverty, disease, delinquency, and war, the great social ills, are now specifically charted. They root in certain attitudes and relationships which ethical religion has ever declared wrong and urged men to abandon, usually on pain of hell. Now comes social science declaring that the continuance of these attitudes and relationships means the disintegration of society, with the accompanying destruction of personality. Therefore, for that part of the message of reli-

gion which concerns the escape from evil the modern preacher who knows his social sciences can affirm, "Thus saith the Lord" with the inevitability and finality of demonstrable and verifiable scientific law. It is a matter which Professor Ellwood might profitably have discussed in detail.

There remains, however, the question of whether the appeal to reason can gain the authority to secure the avoidance of evil which the appeal to fear had for earlier times but has lost for this. We live in a period which at the same time reduces the death-rate from preventable disease and increases the destructiveness of war, which admittedly possesses more technique and equipment for securing release from social ills than it is using. Is this failure due to lack of rationality or of some other qualities to which the New Testament gave that primacy which the Greeks awarded to reason. True the reason of experimental science is different from the reason of the speculative intellect, but those who put their trust in its capacity to keep collective humanity out of the broad road that leads to destruction have yet to reckon with the nature of the crowd, with the vast irrationality of life, its insistence upon taking chances, its periodic tenacity of movement in the face of inevitable disaster, of going hell-bent as the old preachers used to say. What does the part played alike by men of science and men of religion in the world-war indicate concerning the power of reason or good will, or both, to control those savage instincts which make for the mutual destruction of the race? By this time the common people know what the next war means, yet in Europe the attitudes and policies of some nations already assume it and this country pursues courses that lead directly toward it. Is it because the springs of collective conduct lie finally deeper than reason, or merely that man in the group has not yet had time to achieve the capacity to act in the light of known consequences?

Certainly there is no hope for civilization, no prospect of the Beloved Community unless this capacity can be developed

collectively as it has been individually, in the moral order as it has been in the physical order. But just now the race between education and catastrophe is so close that badly as the world needs a positive religion in the sense of one based on objective realities and man's capacity to act in relation to them, still more does it need a religion that is positive in its ability to guide the non-rational and even the irrational elements of life toward a better world.

Does the matter look any differently when we turn from the evil to be shunned to the good to be sought?

Concerning the way that leadeth to life as well as concerning the road to destruction, social science has formulated some general laws. Professor Ellwood emphasizes the part played in human progress by "pattern ideas." Around these civilizations and cultures have formed. They are the dominant social values that have survived the test of experience. Also in part they are the work of creative personalities who have moved the mass, the Utopians imagining the future, and fashioning it, too, whenever their vision coincides with the aspirations and needs of the mass and thus gets the sanction of the common religious instincts and feelings. Out of the survey of these pattern ideas and their consequences, sociology finds the laws of progress, the conditions of a continuing human society. Roughly these are the development of like-mindedness, sympathy, good will, the avoidance of conflict, the universalization of opportunity. This is the way of life and none other. Again science brings certainty to religion.

To get men to take this road, however, requires again more than the rationality that science requires of religion and brings to it. Professor Ellwood sees that science at most can furnish but one of the bases of religion. Religion is and must remain essentially in the realm of faith. That is, it must get men to walk where there is no certainty, to guess, to try, to venture, that life may go forward. By reason are you saved through

faith, is then the formula for the religious science and the scientific religion. And its effectiveness obviously depends upon the part that reason plays in relation to faith. If it is merely to justify the faith that is already within us, then religion remains static, or becomes reactionary. If it is to justify faith in new ventures by giving her the experience of the past as equipment for the journey, then indeed will reason aid her in the building of a better human world as Professor Ellwood desires.

Is the contribution of social science to religion then limited to the practical problems of human living? It calls for a rational faith that religion may use its contributions to the development of humanity, for a creative faith that religion may supplement and continue them. Has it anything to say about the content of faith, about what man shall believe in? Its testimony concerning the conquest of evil and the capacity of the race for progress is, of course, both challenge and reinforcement to faith in a day when man needs desperately to believe in himself collectively. Then social science, as interpreted by Professor Ellwood, pointing out the absurdity of purely subjective religion, goes on to affirm a moral universe as the essential condition of the progressive moral order it finds in human society, and to demand a religious attitude toward nature and the ultimate reality behind nature.

Of course, we are told that religion must be freed from the trammels of theological dogmatism, that the trend of religion is and must be from theology to sociology, and by way of demonstration Professor Ellwood proceeds to set forth some definite theological views, assuring us that they do not affect the argument of the book. Manifestly the emphasis upon rationality in religion will not diminish but increase the interest in the theology; the more the area of the unknown is diminished in practical living the more free the mind is to adventure in other realms. To require theology to become scientific instead of being dogmatic is to give it a stimulus.

This process, however, is not advanced by telling us that Christianity informed by social science will reaffirm the belief in God, immortality, the reality of sin and salvation from sin as a part of the universal consciousness of man. Religion and social progress are not damaged as much by the denial of these beliefs in general as by differences over the form and manner of them in particular. What kind of God, what sort of immortality, how to be saved from sin? It is over these issues that men become unsocial and consequently irreligious. Therefore, what religion needs from social science is some appraisal of specific theological beliefs from the standpoint of social values, or at least such analysis of their social consequences as shall enable theology to make its own appraisal.

True, Professor Ellwood points out that social science requires theological beliefs to show that they will result in a better human world, in more fellowship, in enhancing and extending the approved social values. For conventional religion this involves precisely that reversal of relationships between the two worlds in which we live at the same time which Jesus accomplished when he proclaimed the service of man to be the service of God. Before it can be done in modern religion, the social scientist must give us more than generalizations about theological doctrines. For instance, in relation to the two problems over which the mind of man always has ranged and always will—God and evil—he must show us what modern studies of poverty, disease, and delinquency mean in terms of a theory of evil; he must show us in terms of social analysis just what is the relationship between loving God as one's Father and one's neighbor as one's brother, that is, what actual working connection there is between democracy and the concept of God.

This raises the question of what social science has to say about the teaching of Jesus. It declares, according to Professor Ellwood, that there is no other name under heaven whereby men may be saved. This for the reason that his

teaching of justice, brotherhood, and good will, enunciates the pattern ideas which are the conditions of a cohering and continuing social order. Around these and these only can civilization form. Therefore positive Christianity must proclaim and organize these teachings, for they are in harmony with the fundamental principles of modern social science.

For this leading American sociologists are cited. Giddings with his emphasis upon sympathy and consciousness of kind as the essential factor in human co-operation; Small with his exposition of the place of mutual service and sacrifice in social development; Ross with the formula for social progress, "The maximizing of harmony and co-operation and the minimizing of hostility and conflict"; Cooley with his doctrine of the function of primary groups (those of intimate personal relations, especially the family and neighborhood) in society.

It is here that the evidence lies concerning the social validity of the teaching of Jesus and it needs to be worked out. Cooley proves that the primary groups are the builders of social life, the primary socializing agencies, developing both habits of co-operation and social consciousness. They are also the chief carriers of social tradition, of culture or civilization. Now the teaching of Jesus was obviously and historically the universalizing of the social values and ideals of these primary groups. They are the source of his pattern ideas. This is roughly why and how he has the way of life which social science proves is the only way that humanity can develop. The detailed story of how and why the formative social values and ideals of primary groups were preserved, developed, and given religious sanction among the race from which Jesus sprang has not yet been adequately told by the sociologist. It needs very much more than the scant page Professor Ellwood has given to it.

From the standpoint of anthropology and sociology, Professor Ellwood sees Christianity as a new set of pattern ideas, the precursor of a new type of culture, because it endeavors to

replace the predatory morality of individuals, classes, tribes, nations with a universal, non-predatory morality. This complicates the task of universalizing the social values of primary groups, for it is evident that all groups have two conflicting sets of pattern ideas, one for their relations within themselves, the other for their relations with other groups. The process of social organization—not merely what Ellwood calls barbarism—by multiplying intergroup relationships, develops the predatory attitudes that characterize their earlier stages and intrenches these behind the sanctions of law and religion. So far civilization has always been nationalistic and predatory, and so far Christianity and humanity alike have been defeated by it. Time and again it has organized the centrifugal forces of human living until they have become stronger than the centripetal, and the social order has broken to bits. With such a situation again impending, Christianity as Professor Ellwood sees it, as the records show it, as the heart of man approves it, comes as it did to the Roman world, as a new religion, proclaiming a new way of life, exhorting mankind to forsake the predatory attitudes of self-seeking groups and organize on a world-scale around the co-operative attitudes of the primary groups. Confronting such a task, it looks to social science for something more than the general statement that humanitarian ethics must have the support of a religion of humanity. It needs analysis of the process by which in some measure the unsocial values of intergroup relationships have already been transcended by the social values developed within primary groups.

The problem is finally one of motivation and Ellwood gives it but a passing touch and a lingering glance in closing. Sound instruction about the control of public opinion and general principles concerning the organization of economics, politics, and the family will bear no fruit until life be moved to seek a better way of life. All this discussion could profitably be exchanged for a detailed account of the part that self-seeking

motives actually play in human society. The fact is, the general principles enunciated by Ellwood are either now, or at once will be, accepted by the powerful group of intellectual liberals in American Christianity, and yet nothing adequate happens. Why? They know without being told by sociology that the only sufficient motive for human living is love, that love that becomes sacrificial becomes also redemptive, but liberalism has always been without passion, it has never desired the Universal and Beloved Community ardently enough to die for it. So the people perish for lack of knowledge of the way to live, for none may give it them until, like Jesus, they are willing to yield all, church, country, life, for the sake of humanity. To the joint task of science and religion the former can bring only one part of the divine urge—the passion for truth—and that is unavailing without the other part—the passion for fellowship.

For this religion must fall back upon the resources it possessed before social science offered to come to its aid, when alone it proclaimed that love was the supreme good. Much impetus to social progress has been given by those who loved God enough to seek to serve their fellows, and their fellow-men enough to seek to save them from hell, and to try to get them to heaven. The same passion is now working still more effectively in modern social movements, alike among despised radicals and self-sacrificing church members. Can social science show us how it is generated and increased?

For our day does the process lie in working out the possibilities of the union of social science and religion in concrete cases? Does religion wait again upon life? Take for instance the man who hews the coal for us. He needs a more human lot. Science tells us the final condition of its achievement is the reorganization and co-ordination of the production and distribution of coal to secure the greatest human use from that natural resource. It is a long and difficult job. Do the social scientists and the preachers love the coal miner and humanity

enough to set about their part in it? Or take the case of those who live in the countries to the south of us that are fast becoming financial dependencies of American banking interests and, therefore, the serfs of American politicians and militarists. Science tells us that the only way to save them and ourselves from the disaster of imperialism is to revise our concept and practice of property and its relation to forms of government in the light of what history has discovered in that field. Again do we love these brown-skinned children of God to whom we send our missions, do we love the ideal community, enough to undertake an extremely difficult and disagreeable job? It may be that only in using for human need the tools that science has already fashioned for us shall we increase the love without which reason remains impotent to save mankind from disaster.

In short, the challenge and the impetus that social science brings to religion is to the revolutionary aspects of its social function, and it is the characteristic of Christianity that these bulk larger than its sanction of the good already attained. If preachers content themselves with proclaiming that sociology says in the long run no other than a Christian world is practicable, if sociologists are satisfied with enunciating general principles concerning the harmony between science and Christianity, their salt will soon lose its savor. Ellwood declares that "no crisis in social evolution exceeds the transition from one type of culture to another," and we stand in that situation. The application of the natural sciences to human living has made such transition imperative. We must pass from the individualistic, nationalistic type of culture, with its emphasis upon private rights, to a collective type, emphasizing function and social values. The pattern ideas of the passing age still hold and endanger the life of the world. That they are opposite to the pattern ideas of Jesus is known to religion. That they are antagonistic to the needs of humanity is known to science. If religion and science are then to help each other save the world, all their force must be thrown at the moment

on the side of the revolutionary culture which Professor Ellwood says Christianity truly is. They cannot afford any tenderness toward the older order such as he has shown in lending aid and comfort to economic classes based on special privilege on the ground that separate economic functions are always necessary, or the church has shown by failing to strike at the roots of the economic order that has produced the twelve-hour day, the seven-day week, and a falling standard of living.

Something more vital than the reconstruction of religion is involved in the thesis of Professor Ellwood. It is creative change that is required. The sinfulness of the present social order, the necessity and the possibility of a new life, this is the message that science requires of religion. And for those who proclaim it, the Black Hundreds and the Inquisition wait, and other Bufords will be chartered. Yet did new life and new religion ever come on any other terms? Did the crowd that lives content in ordinary days, unmoved by reason or by fear, that is swept to destruction by primitive passion in days of war and revolution, ever move a step nearer fellowship and God, away from robbing and killing toward sharing and loving, except the trail were shown by some souls strong enough to take it? If social science and religion, being joined, would now move men, it is required that their word shall become flesh, tread the paths of service, and not turn aside from the way of the cross.